

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act





Accessibility for All Manitobans

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act became law in 2013. Under this landmark legislation, the Manitoba government develops mandatory accessibility standards. Each standard addresses barriers for Manitobans in key areas of daily living. Standards apply to Manitoba's private and public sector organizations.

The province works with representatives from the disability community, as well as public and private sector organizations, to develop accessibility standards.

The standards are developed to achieve real results, in stages. Each standard is introduced with a time frame for implementation, which will be determined by the complexity of the area. The standards and timelines are established with consideration to all affected sectors.



We All Need Accessibility

Disability affects the lives of many Manitobans. According to Statistics Canada, nearly one in three Manitobans have a disability. This number will continue to grow as our population ages.

Nearly every Manitoban has a disability, knows someone with a disability or will have a disability in the coming years.

Improving accessibility is the right thing to do. It's also the smart thing to do. People with disabilities have an estimated spending power of \$55 billion across Canada. People with disabilities also represent a large pool of untapped employment potential. When we make Manitoba accessible to people with disabilities everyone benefits.

Disability

- has no social, economic or educational boundaries
- can occur at any stage of life
- may be temporary or permanent



Consider the Broad Range of Abilities

When we think of barriers to accessibility, we tend to think of people with physical disabilities that are visible. But we cannot always tell who has a disability.

People have different degrees of sight, hearing and understanding that can impact communication. Mental health issues and chronic illness can also create barriers to participation.

By removing barriers to participation, this act benefits all Manitobans.

Making Progress

Over the past two decades, much progress has been made in creating a more inclusive society. Streets with accessible curbs, inclusive schooling and TV closed captioning are just a few examples. The Accessibility for Manitobans Act builds on that progress. The Manitoba government and designated public sector organizations (which include large municipalities, health authorities, crown corporations, colleges, universities and school divisions) and smaller government agencies, boards and commissions must all prepare accessibility plans that addresses systemic barriers in policies, practices and procedures. Plans must be made available to members of the public upon request.



How Manitoba Introduces Accessibility Legislation

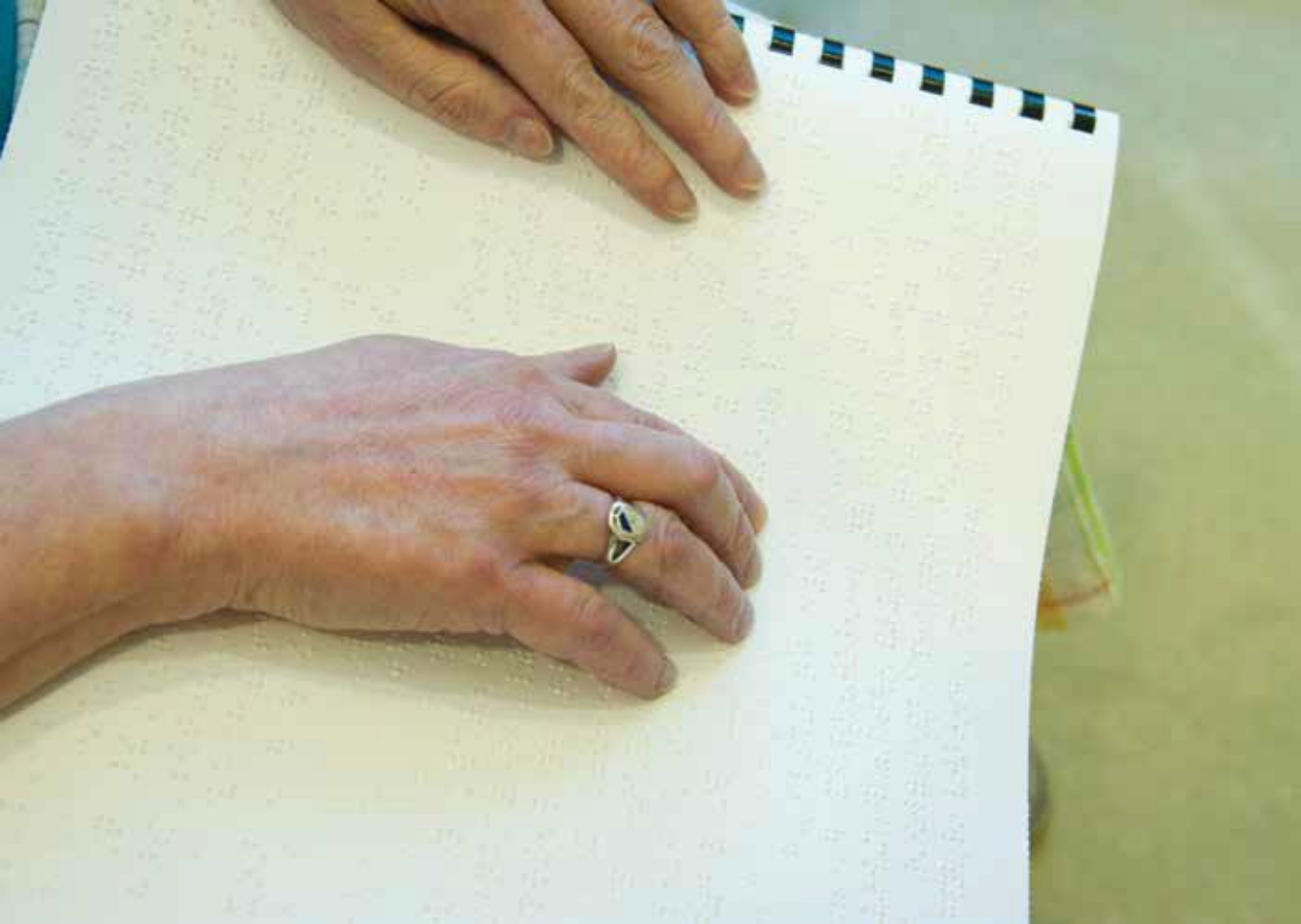
Creating Standards

Accessibility standards are the building blocks the Manitoba government will use to make real, measurable and effective changes to accessibility.

The Accessibility Advisory Council is responsible for developing proposed standards that could become regulations under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. The advisory council is made up of members of the disability community and other key decision makers, including representatives from the business community, municipalities and other organizations. It has been designed to represent the interests of parties most affected by measures aimed at achieving greater accessibility.

In developing a standard, the council may establish committees of technical experts and other parties familiar with specific issues to provide input. The committees might include representatives of sectors or organizations that will have obligations under the standard being developed.

Public consultations are essential to the process. Standards will only be realized by extensive and transparent consultations with persons with disabilities, organizations with a responsibility to eliminate barriers and the general public.



Standards Focus on Five Key Areas

1. The **Accessible Customer Service Standard** was the first standard under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. Under this standard, all Manitoba organizations with at least one employee (including businesses) must create policies and procedures that help achieve respectful, barrier-free customer service.
2. The **Accessible Employment Standard** was the second standard enacted under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. This standard builds on the existing requirements of the Manitoba Human Rights Code. It applies to paid employees who are full-time, part-time, apprentices and seasonal workers. It addresses practices relating to employee-employer relationships, including measures, policies and practices related to the recruitment, hiring and retention of employees.
3. The **Accessible Information and Communication Standard** was the third standard enacted under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. Under this standard, organizations need to consider how Manitobans interact with or access information, including on websites, to develop measures, policies and practices to provide barrier-free information and communication.
4. The **Accessible Transportation Standard** was the fourth standard to be enacted under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. The objective of the standard is to help conventional and paratransit service providers, schools, vehicles-for-hire and municipalities create a system of transportation that is more inclusive for all Manitobans, regardless of abilities.
5. The **Accessible Outdoor Public Spaces Standard** is the fifth standard under The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. This standard applies to sidewalks, pathways, parks and other aspects of the outdoor environment that are designed and constructed.



Look to the Future – Act Now

The Accessibility for Manitobans Act provides a long-term, systemic and pro-active approach to dealing with accessibility issues. This commitment to achieve significant progress in the first ten years makes Manitoba more inclusive for everyone.

Accessibility standards outline requirements by developing clear, specific and achievable measures to achieve compliance. The act allows standards to be developed so organizations, both public and private, can spread out accessibility investments over time. They can plan ahead and incorporate capital expenditures into business plans and strategies.

How Standards Become Law

Once an initial standard has been developed, the Accessibility Advisory Council puts it forward for public review. After public review is complete, the council considers this feedback as it finalizes the proposed standard for submission to the minister responsible for accessibility.

The minister responsible for accessibility reviews the final proposed standard and decides whether to recommend that it be enacted as a regulation – either in whole, in part or with changes. When the standard is enacted as a regulation, it becomes law in Manitoba.

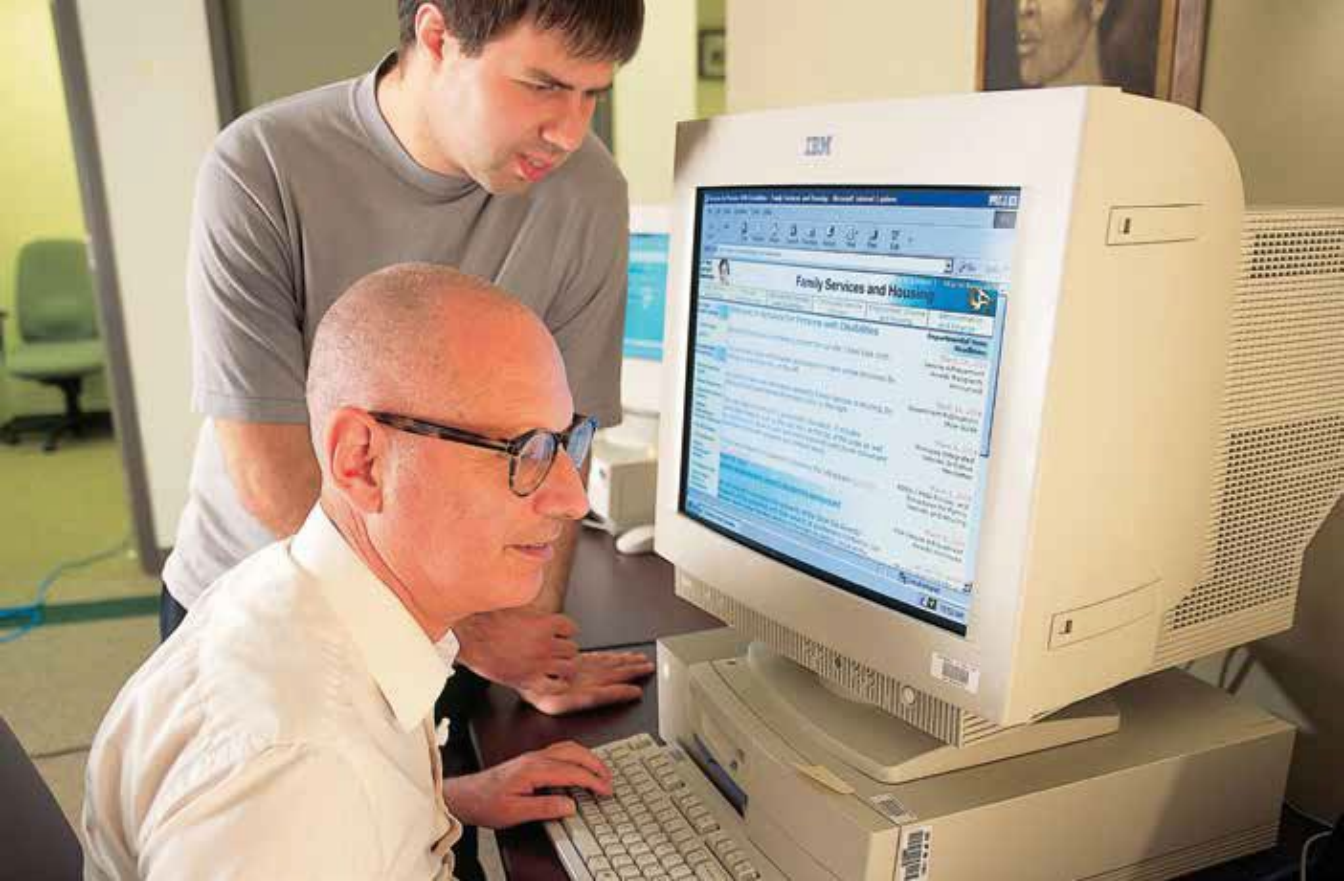


Who Must Comply

Accessibility standards set out measures, policies, practices or other requirements to identify, prevent and remove barriers. The standards outline the persons and organizations that are subject to the standards and the deadline for compliance. Requirements and timelines differ for types and sizes of organizations. Each standard must take into account the type of barriers being addressed and any technical or economic factors that may be involved in its implementation.

Once the government has approved a standard and it becomes a regulation, all organizations identified in the standard must comply within the timelines that have been set out. Non-compliance with an order and other infractions may result in penalties.

The Human Rights Code is the most powerful act in Manitoba. Individuals whose specific needs are not met by accessibility legislation will still be able to file a complaint with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission.



Be Aware of Barriers to Accessibility

A barrier is anything that keeps someone with a disability from participating in the social or economic life of our communities.

When you think about making your organization accessible, it is important to be aware of both visible and invisible barriers.

Architectural or structural barriers may result from the design of a building, such as stairs, doorways, the width of hallways and even room layout.

Information and communication barriers can make it difficult for people to receive or convey information. Things like small print size, low colour contrast between text and background, confusing design of printed materials and the use of language that is not clear can all cause difficulty.

Technology, or lack of it, can prevent people from accessing information. Everyday tools like computers, telephones and other aids can all present barriers.

Systemic barriers can occur through policies and procedures. These are any practices or rules that restrict people with disabilities. Example: denying access to a person with a service animal.

Attitude is perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome. Some people don't know how to communicate with people who have visible or invisible disabilities. They may feel that they could offend the individual with a disability by offering help. Others might ignore or avoid people with disabilities altogether.

Raising Awareness

Raising awareness is an important part of making our province accessible for all Manitobans. Under the act, the Manitoba Accessibility Office develops and conducts public education activities to increase awareness about the act.

As standards are introduced and regulations become law, the Manitoba Accessibility Office provides tools and other resources to help organizations understand and comply with accessibility regulations.

We all need to be aware of the benefits of accessibility – to our lives and to our economy.

Resources

Go to [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca) for the latest information on Manitoba's accessibility legislation, including:

- updates on standards and compliance deadlines
- guides, tools and tips on how to make your organization accessible
- more information about The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

This publication is available in alternate formats upon request.

Contact information

Contact us with any questions, concerns or to request information in an alternate format.

Manitoba Accessibility Office

630-240 Graham Avenue

Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C OJ7

Phone: 204-945-7613

Toll free: 1-800-282-8069, ext. 7613

Email: MAO@gov.mb.ca

Website: [AccessibilityMB.ca](https://www.accessibilitymb.ca)

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